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28 January 1986

MEMORANDUM FOR: [] Deputy Director,
National Reconnaissance Office

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FROM: [] DS&T/OU

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SUBJECT: Meeting with [] and
R. Cargill Hall Concerning USAF History

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1. On Thursday, 23 January 1986, a meeting was held in my office at 835 Ames Building attended by [] of Rand Corporation, R. Cargill Hall of the Air Force Historical Research Center, Maxwell AFB, and [] a contractor representing your office. The subject of the meeting was a history written by Hall that had encountered difficulties in the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force. Hall was previously a historian with Lockheed and NASA, and has written extensively on the early efforts in the U.S. Navy and Air Force to develop satellites.

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2. Unfortunately, Hall had not been briefed on the National Reconnaissance Program and, in researching his contribution to a history marking the 75th anniversary of the Air Force, he assumed that all of this nation's satellites belonged to the U.S. Air Force. Although aware of the National Reconnaissance Office through his unclassified researches, he was unwitting as to the actual role it plays in the reconnaissance program. [] carefully explained to Hall that he could not write about satellite systems that came within the purview of the NRO and had to limit his history to those satellites which the Air Force did on its own, such as Midas, Vela, and the DMSP weather satellites. [] who in the mid-1960s wrote a definitive history of the CORONA [] efforts for Program A, suggested that Hall's history might address the various support efforts that the Air Force provides for the NRO -- launch and tracking facilities plus recovery.

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3. On Friday, 24 January, Hall, in the company of the Chief Air Force Historian, Dr. Richard H. Kohn, attended a meeting in the Pentagon with Robert McCormick, administrative assistant to the Secretary of the Air Force, and several representatives of the NRO. That meeting agreed to grant Hall a BYEMAN clearance and give him access to certain documents that he would need to complete his history. It was also decided that the product of his effort would be compartmented.

4. During our Thursday meeting, [] agreed with me that a number of very old Rand documents now in my possession should be downgraded from Top Secret to Secret or even Confidential. I had earlier approached Rand on this matter, but was told the Air Force had to approve

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such action. I can find no one in the Air Force to assume responsibility for old Rand documents. Primarily, these studies deal with [redacted] reconnaissance programs, [redacted] executed in 1956 and declassified in the mid-1970s. However, [redacted] 1950 paper suggesting such a program is still Top Secret. There are also several Rand studies that preceded the decision to proceed with the [redacted] effort. They are very innocuous having mainly to do with the reduced per unit cost of the Thor and Atlas missiles that made them affordable for launching satellites and studies on ablative materials for protecting reentry into the atmosphere. I feel these papers are grossly over classified at this time. [redacted] suggested that I ask you to appoint him and [redacted] to review the documents and make a recommendation to you concerning their classification.

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5. We also discussed the possibility of writing outside of the BYEMAN channel about the decision-making process that led to the approval of the first [redacted] satellite effort. I am enclosing a copy of a section of my history that covers this period in the mid-1950s. I believe I can get the few Top Secret documents cited in this chapter downgraded to the Secret level. If it could also be decided that the information contained therein does not need to be protected in the BYEMAN channel, the history could be made available to a much wider audience.

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[redacted]
DS&T/OU, 835 Ames Building
[redacted]

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